

THE TERRIBLE TRAGEDY.

A Quiet Review. Queer Stories, Exaggerations, Absurdities, and Suggestions.

Chilled to the bone, I have just returned from the dust to dust at Greenwood, and am in no special mood for Barrett's uneven performance of *King Lear*, nor do I care just now to chronicle the success of *Lady Macbeth* at the Fifth Avenue. In the presence of Brooklyn's awful spectacle, tragedied on the mimic stage becomes a burlesque, and we have no stomach for old-fashioned comedy.

In view of the momentous questions involved in a scrutiny of the dread disaster in the City of Churches, I feel called upon to protest against Just judgments; against the senseless stories of hysterical girls; against the bombastic boastings of melodramatic talkers.

This is no time for ex-gloration—but the mania has taken hold of both men and women, and the sensational stories have enough to curdle the blood of a good Indian.

In brief, the fire which cost \$200,000 is burned to the ground; nearly 300 lives were lost, including two actors, Claude Burroughs and H. S. Murdoch, and two reporters, William J. Donnelly, who was a young friend and ten years' companion of mine, and Mr. Hand of the *Comet*. All the other actors got out with but little loss. The combined wardrobes of Misses Vernon, Claxton, Harrison, Mrs. Farren, and the rest, could be replaced for \$150, and no jeweler worth mentioning was missed. When the actors got out there was danger on the stage, but those who passed through underneath the parquet had the good fortune to be among the first. They saw no stir, encountered no dead bodies, were shocked by no "uplifted faces." Fire Marshal Keely is carefully investigating the cause of the fire, and thus far there appears no cause for censure of the owners or managers. The architect's admissions are very queer, and the testimony of the stage hands is rough on the direction of that part of the house.

—A QUIET FACT.

The fire occurred on Tuesday night at twenty minutes past eleven o'clock. There were about 1,000 persons in the theatre, including many who had come in during the day, and all having time to go to the audience.

In the audience were several reporters and policemen. In less than fifteen minutes from the first mishap nearly 300 dead were turned to the ruined building, the fire was under control, and comparative quiet reigned in the vicinity. The New York papers went to press all alone from two to three following morning, and not one of them suggested even a possibility of grave loss of life.

Where were the reporters?

And the dramen and mimes, where were they? In the light of evidence brought out by Fire Marshal Keely, we find that the police knew how to handle the situation, and that the managers withheld from the press? If 1,000 people go in, and only about 300 come out, it is no satisfaction to be told that there was great excitement and confusion. Of course there was. The police, the reporters, and the managers, and reporters are not ordinary men. Excitement should be like the stimulus of sodium to the brain. It is the first step to action, and then that half the people were left behind, and the reporters should have stayed there till the last.

Late in the morning the terrible truth was told, and the literary band began his work. Some of it was enough to draw tears from the dryest eye, and some was so full of fancy plumed its wing and flew like gossip. Keers of scrap books couldn't do better than to copy it all down, and the headlines of the dailies the buncles of the press indulged until the word pressure of the list of dead came to them, and then the list of the living. Since then the forward statements have been the reportorial rule, gush being confined almost exclusively to the pages anxious to get attention.

—THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE THEATRE.

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Read the score or more stories told by and about Miss Claxton for instance. Half inventions, half truths, and a very little truth. If we could get the facts, and the real story, we could easily assure the audience, to repeat words already used, to give you an alarm, for the benefit of the public. Then the score, cast up, will forward statements have been the reportorial rule, gush being confined almost exclusively to the pages anxious to get attention.

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